Notes and news

Walmart puts the accent on lifelong learning

Walmart offers accredited high-school diplomas and career certificates through Career Online High School (COHS), part of the company's lifelong-learning program.

COHS is designed to re-engage adults in education. It is free for Walmart employees. To date, more than 130 have received their high-school diploma through COHS. Another 433 are currently enrolled.

"Working with Walmart, we have a tremendous opportunity to make a real impact on the lives of people who are seeking a better future," said Dawn Gerrain, General Manager, skills group, Cengage Learning, which has teamed up with Walmart on the initiative. "COHS is designed to help people to succeed – whether to get better jobs with greater salary potential or to position them for further education."

"One of the best ways to create opportunity in America is through access to education and training," said Brian Poland, Director of Walmart lifelong learning and talent development. "We believe a high-school diploma paves the way for a better future – at Walmart or beyond."

Walmart's lifelong-learning program provides employees with access to no-cost or low-cost education programs including English as a second language, high-school, career certificates, and a comprehensive college-credit-for-prior-learning program.

"Through COHS, our employees have the opportunity to earn their accredited high-school diploma with a career certificate, for free. Working at Walmart opens doors to new and exciting opportunities," continued Brian Poland.

"By completing the COHS program, I proved to myself and many others around me that I can re-engage with my education and find success," said Monique Kenon, a Walmart employee and COHS graduate. She is currently enrolled on the retail-management program at American Public University.

According to information from the US Department of Labor, people with a high-school diploma earn 38 percent more than those without one. Other studies show that high-school graduates earn up to twice as much as non-high-school graduates over their lifetimes.

In addition to an accredited high-school diploma, program graduates earn a career certificate in one of eight high-growth, high-demand fields, from child care and education to certified transportation.

Students have up to 18 months to complete the program and may be able to finish it in as few as six months by transferring previously earned high-school credits.

The Walmart lifelong-learning COHS program pairs each student with an academic coach, who helps with developing an individual career plan, offers guidance and encouragement, evaluates performance and connects the learner with the resources needed to demonstrate mastery of the course material. Classes are supported by board-certified instructors and students have round-the-clock access to the online-learning platform.

Walmart employs more than 2.3 million people worldwide.

Rolls-Royce women take the springboard to success

Some 1,000 women employed by Rolls-Royce plc have completed the Springboard women's-development program.

In the late-1990s, there was no mechanism in Rolls-Royce for single-gender learning and development programs for women but a group of female managers – together with some male advocates – had a vision to change things. Among this group was Eleanor Radbourne, currently the company's Head of global talent management and diversity and inclusion.

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"The Springboard program is a good fit for Rolls-Royce," said Eleanor Radbourne. "It was originally pitched at non-management women whose careers had stalled and women who wanted development opportunities. The ability to run the programs with up to 30 women means that large numbers of women have access to good quality development in a highly cost-effective way.

"The Springboard networking approach, in a confidential uplifting environment, means that Rolls-Royce's women employees benefit from the experiences of other women and, in particular, the guest speakers," she added.

Developed by the Springboard Consultancy, a UK-based international training company specializing in addressing women's-development issues, the Springboard women's development program enables women to identify the clear, practical and realistic steps that they want to take to make a better world for themselves at work and home, while building the practical skills and confidence to take these steps. The program is delivered – currently in 45 countries – over a three-month period, through an extensive network of licensed local trainers. It has so far been used by more than 240,000 women around the world.

"Women from any of the company's sites can attend and there are no restrictions or qualifying criteria other than self-nomination, and support from line management," said Jan Morris, of Ruby Tuesday Training, who has delivered more than 40 Springboard programs for Rolls-Royce since 1997. "Rolls-Royce works around the world, so we have had women attend Springboard programs from countries including France, Portugal and Canada.

"There is now a great deal of diversity represented among Springboard participants – in terms of jobs performed, areas of the company represented, staff grades, nationalities and ethnicity," continued Jan Morris. "Today's Springboarders accept accountability, take control of their career progression and are much more empowered. They believe that they can influence change."

Hyatt smoothes access to training

Hospitality company Hyatt has introduced a tool to give its global workforce of more than 100,000 easier access to training.

Saba Cloud will power learning and development for Hyatt employees across 12 brands around the world. This will help them to both find and use mobile "micro-learning" content and to share new ideas and best practice.

"When we looked at learning technology, we knew we wanted a platform that was intuitive and accessible but could also provide robust functionally and analytics features," said Christy Sinnott, Vice-President of global learning for Hyatt. "We have been able to use the tool to connect colleagues around shared context to better deliver service – by their role, where they work, or as part of the broader Hyatt community."

Saba Cloud helps organizations to deliver concepts and content across multiple formats, from more traditional instructor-led training to e-learning and shorter, "in the moment" mobile micro-learning content.

An example is Hyatt's training videos that, through images alone, can demonstrate tasks from how to register a guest to how to make a bed.

Three-year deals take off at Lockheed Martin

Lockheed Martin's aerospace and defense business has awarded two three-year contracts to GP Strategies to provide training consulting, instructional design, course development and training-administration services.

GP Strategies will support the learning needs for all Lockheed Martin aeronautics facilities with the primary work to be done in Fort Worth, Texas; Marietta, Georgia; and Palmdale, California.

"This partnership will facilitate efficiencies and consistencies in training development, delivery and administration. Together, the Lockheed Martin and GP Strategies learning teams will help to ensure that Lockheed Martin employees are ready for the future," stated Debbie Ung, Senior Vice-President, GP Strategies performance-readiness solutions group.

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Meanwhile, electricity and gas supplier National Grid has chosen GP Strategies to provide global learning services.

Under the initial three-year agreement, GP Strategies will help National Grid to drive globally consistent, cost-effective ways of working.

Scott Greenberg, Chief Executive Officer of GP Strategies, said: "We anticipate that National Grid will be one of our largest customers in the global electricity and gas transmission and distribution sector and will add to our already large customer base in the power-generation and liquefied-natural-gas utilities markets."

Hitachi benefits from micro-adaptive learning

New learning methods are helping a global IT solutions company to achieve a 50 percent decrease in training time for its sales teams, and uncover and fill knowledge gaps.

Last year, Hitachi Data Systems deployed a micro-adaptive e-learning approach from innovation company Area9 Learning. Since putting it into place, HDS has been able to provide sales staff with a more effective approach to corporate training.

The adaptive platform uses a "teaching-by-asking" model to personalize learning. As individuals answer content-related questions and give each response a confidence rating, the system analyzes the responses and customizes the path through the content, delivering material most applicable to each learner's needs.

"Much of our sales training is mandatory, with courses typically 45 minutes to an hour long," said Terri Casady, Senior Director of the Hitachi Data Systems academy. "With the micro-adaptive approach, we can see that sales staff achieve our target proficiency in 20 to 30 minutes or less, freeing up thousands of hours of productive time to spend with our customers."

The adaptive program was able to identify users' individual knowledge gaps and adjust accordingly. The adaptive approach enabled users to focus on material they did not already know while skipping items they did.

"Each of us has different strengths and weaknesses, and a good adaptive engine should adapt to our make-up to help us to focus more on our weak areas," said Ulrik Christensen, Chairman of Area9 Learning.

Terri Casady commented: "It is madness to require people to take training on things they already know. Our salesforce quickly realized that the micro-adaptive system was adjusting to their specific needs. They love it."

Three more universities team up with Airbus

Airbus Group has announced three new members of its university partner program – Imperial College London, the Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) and the KTH Royal Institute of Technology (Stockholm). This brings the number of members to 16 universities based around the world.

"These partnerships underscore the universities' and Airbus Group's commitment to working hand in hand in developing education and training which will meet the future needs of the aerospace industry," said Thierry Baril, Chief Human-Resources Officer. "We want to continue inspiring young people from all backgrounds and nationalities to enrich the diversity of the aerospace industry. These new partnerships will support us in reaching this challenging and motivating goal."

Accenture marks ten years of technology education

Accenture has provided more than 100,000 employees with technology education developed through a ten-year collaboration with MIT Professional Education, the professional-education arm of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

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The Accenture Technology Academy (ATA) was created in 2006 to equip employees with the skills needed to deliver technology services for clients. Accenture employees around the world have received more than 16 million hours of MIT education through the program to date.

"The Accenture Technology Academy has been a cornerstone of our enduring relationship with MIT over the past decade," said Bhaskar Ghosh, Group Chief Executive, Accenture Technology Services. "Accenture is committed to investing in its people, and our relationship with MIT enables us to educate and grow our talent so we can differentiate ourselves. Our mission is to help our clients to achieve business outcomes through new liquid strategies, and our focus is on new IT such as digital, cloud and security. We are also expanding our capabilities to innovate in fast-growing areas like artificial intelligence and block-chain, which *The Wall Street Journal* explains as "a way to let companies to make and verify transactions on a network instantaneously without a central authority."

The ATA comprises:

- A certification program: four different certifications have been available to employees over the past ten years: application developer, designer, tester and test designer. Accenture is preparing to launch ten new certificate programs in areas including: agile, artificial intelligence, cloud, data science, design thinking, the internet of things, mobile, security and web essentials. When face-to-face training sessions are not possible, the sessions can be conducted via Accenture connected-learning classrooms in 72 locations around the globe.
- Lectures and online videos, podcasts, and learning boards: each person in Accenture's global workforce has an opportunity to learn from MIT faculty through face-to-face lectures and online videos, podcasts and learning boards. Many new online training courses are available on topics including: artificial intelligence, micro-services, security, next-generation cloud and the internet of things.

"We at MIT Professional Education are proud to have facilitated the quality training of tens of thousands of Accenture people in the area of information technology over the last 10 years," said Bhaskar Pant, Executive Director of MIT Professional Education. "Our expert faculty has provided research-based, cutting-edge knowledge to Accenture employees, deploying traditional to the most modern education-dissemination methods. We enthusiastically look forward to the next decade of growing our relationship with Accenture through the development of new certificate programs covering emerging and transformation-enabling areas such as artificial intelligence, data science, mobility and security."

"Accenture's 10-year relationship with MIT began with the ATA and grew to encompass additional valuable programs that involve research, thought leadership and the development of innovative business concepts for our clients," said Sanjeev Vohra, Managing Director and Business Sponsor for MIT, Accenture Technology Services. "Today, as we collaborate with several entities across MIT, we are steadfastly focussed on learning, research and recruiting to spur innovation for both organizations, providing our employees with valuable opportunities, and delivering better business outcomes for our clients."

High-potential employees put on path to the top

Oman Oil Refineries and Petroleum Industries Company (Orpic) has begun a program to prepare high-potential employees for senior leadership roles.

Created by GP Strategies, it will initially see two groups of 20 Omani participants each undertake a bespoke, internationally-benchmarked course that will lead to GP Strategies certification, alongside an accredited award from the UK's Chartered Management Institute.

Participants will take a customized series of modules focussed on aspects such as the foundations of leadership and managing performance. They will develop skills in areas such as communication, coaching and strategy, and will consider their personal leadership style through a blend of training approaches.

"Orpic believes in bringing the potential of its people alive in order to ensure that their skills and abilities are further enhanced to meet the company's standards," said Ali Al Mahruqi, Training-Center Manager. "We firmly believe that, through this program, we can nurture and develop future leaders who will spearhead Oman's progress and success."

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"Orpic is currently undergoing transformation with three strategic growth projects – the Sohar refinery-improvement project, the Muscat Sohar product pipeline and the Liwa plastics-industries complex – which will enable more opportunities and will firmly place Orpic as a leading player in the global refining and petrochemicals sector. It will also help to attract, retain and develop local talent," Ali Al Mahruqi concluded.

Chartered institute of marketing reforms give learners more control

The Chartered Institute of Marketing is to reform its continuing professional development program, which has more than 15,000 people enrolled annually.

The CIM needed a platform not only to ensure the smoother implementation of continuing professional development and integration with its membership data, but also to better reflect how people learn and develop in their careers.

The existing CPD program did not reflect the CIM's customer-centric values. Its members increasingly demand an excellent online experience and want to feel in control of their own development. The fast-changing, wide-ranging skills that marketing people require are developed not only through formal training but also as a result of practice, experimentation and collaboration with fellow marketers.

Powered by Brightwave's collaborative-learning system tessello, the new CPD program supports how the CIM's members learn and allows both formal and informal activity to contribute to their CPD record. Members build a continuous record of their learning that is submitted annually as evidence of their development.

In addition to the CPD portal, the solution incorporates a skills-analysis tool. Rather than presenting members with a generic group of accredited activities, members' existing capabilities drive the learning they undertake.

Members enrolled on the CPD program take an interactive diagnostic at the start of each year of their membership. Based on the CIM's professional-marketing standards, the tool analyses the current capability of members, enabling them to make an informed choice on how to focus their learning and development time.

"Our partnership with the CIM is a significant milestone for Brightwave and tessello," said Caroline Walmsley, Managing Director at Brightwave Group. "Traditional learning-management systems are ill-equipped to serve the needs of ongoing professional development, both from a learner and organizational point of view. Tessello allows informal and social learning to be captured and accredited […] The CIM is leading the way with its innovative, diagnostic-led approach which provides an exciting personalized CPD journey towards achieving and maintaining chartered-marketer status for members."

"At the core of our brand identity is our vision for marketing to be recognized for playing a pivotal role in business, with professional marketers delivering insights, strategy and growth to organizations of all shapes and sizes," said Chris Daly, the CIM's Chief Executive. "When we began our search for a learning tool we knew that it needed not only to support this aim of harnessing shared learning, but also to support the scale of our ambition for a transformed CPD provision at CIM. We established that there was no single platform on the market that could meet our aims until we saw tessello. Combined with a bespoke diagnostic tool, we have in tessello a platform that not only improves the efficiency and delivery of CPD, but also provides members with a personalized journey through their professional development."

Online learning portal launched

The trade body for kitchen, bedroom and bathroom installers in the UK, iKKBI, has launched an online learning portal.

Developed by online-learning specialist Virtual College and the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI) it enables people to access a range of hand-picked online training resources suitable for kitchen, bedroom and bathroom retail and installation businesses of all sizes. The courses range from health and safety to customer care, time management, asbestos awareness and trading fairly.

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The iKBBI Chief Executive, Damian Walters, commented: “Online learning can provide particular benefits for our industry as it can be used flexibly, anytime and anywhere there is access to the internet.”

“Installers are busy people who simply cannot afford to take much time out to undertake CPD in person. A directory of online opportunities therefore provides them with access to learning at a time and pace that suits them.”

Both iKBBI members and the wider kitchen, bedroom and bathroom industry will be able to access the learning portal directly from the website and choose courses from within their iAcademy portal which meet the specific needs of their staff.

Mandy Garnham, Commercial-Training Executive at the CTSI, said: “At CTSI we encourage corporate leadership to adopt a culture and attitude that promote good trading practices and compliance. We are excited about the benefits that this initiative can bring to iKBBI members.”

UK skill shortage “a catastrophe waiting to happen”

The UK Government must combat the looming skills crisis by prioritizing the introduction of initiatives to attract workers into the utilities sector.

“The skills shortage in the UK is a catastrophe waiting to happen; one that literally threatens to turn out Britain’s lights,” said Chris Wood, Chief Executive of Develop Training Limited, a training specialist in the utilities sector. “A solution to the twin problems of a chronic skills shortage in our utilities industry and high youth unemployment is obvious – train young people to take the places of the aging workforce. But it just is not happening at anything like the rate that it needs to be.”

He continued: “As householders and businesses in the UK wonder about a post-Brexit future, they should remember that the utilities sector is still facing a potentially devastating skills shortage. The sector is constantly on a recruitment drive but is simply not receiving the response it requires. We all need confidence that our lights will stay on, our heating will continue to keep our houses warm and our taps keep providing running water, but the day is fast approaching when there will simply not be enough workers to do these vital jobs.”

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